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Date: March 21, 2012

To: Representative Lyons, House Education Committee Chairperson
House Education Committee members

From: Rebecca Park, State Governmental Affairs

Re: Testimony on HR 148 and 153

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of HR 148 and 153. The resolutions before you today both address a challenge with the current MI Merit Curriculum. Namely, the restrictions the curriculum requirements place on student's schedules and therefore affecting their ability to enroll in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses.

Farm Bureau policy, as developed by our farmer members asks for a well-rounded education, which includes CTE, to be an attainable goal for all high school students. HR 148 calls for state policies that ensure agricultural science courses count toward graduation. Michigan agriscience programs offer the knowledge and skills necessary for students to understand the complexity and multitude of opportunities in the food and agriculture industry. Additionally, they offer leadership development opportunities ranging from teambuilding to public speaking and problem solving to professional writing.

For example, one agriscience program allows students to operate a fully functional retail greenhouse operation. Not only do the students learn about plants but they learn skills necessary to operate a business and they get first-hand experience at personal communication skills. The ability to interact with a variety of different types of people and personalities is crucial for success in today's global economy. Farm Bureau policy encourages students to take CTE courses and gain that experience.

HR 153 encourages schools to offer foreign language classes in elementary. By offering foreign language during elementary school years, high school students would still be able to meet the current MI Merit Curriculum requirements and yet be provided flexibility in their schedule during their high school years. Agriculture, as an industry, has relied on agriscience CTE courses to broaden a student's awareness of careers available in agriculture. While still doing our part through programs such as Agriculture Career's Conference put on through a partnership with GreenStone Farm Credit Services, 4-H, and FFA, agriculture uses CTE to help recruit students.

We ask for your support of HR 148 and 153.